



2015 Annual Legislative Report

Indiana Legislative Youth Advisory Council (ILYAC)

Established by HEA 1162-2008, the council is responsible for submitting at least one annual report to the Indiana General Assembly on issues pertaining to youth and young adults across the state. The council is funded through the Indiana Department of Education budget and overseen by the Indiana Bar Foundation.

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Letter From The Council Leadership

December 1, 2015

Respected Members of the Indiana General Assembly,

First and Foremost, we, the Indiana Legislative Youth Advisory Council, would like to thank each of you for taking the time to review the Indiana Legislative Youth Advisory Council's Annual Legislative Report. We as a council aim to serve as the voice of all Hoosier youth. Through this nonpartisan report, we offer you recommendations and policies that Hoosier youth find significant. We believe that by offering you these recommendations, Indiana's youth will have a part in steering policies that affect them the most.

In last year's annual report we stressed the importance of a strong council membership. We mentioned that ILYAC's membership was very low overall and that a strong membership foundation was absolutely crucial for the overall betterment of our council. We are proud to announce that our council has grown a great deal in size. The Indiana Legislative Youth Advisory Council is now comprised of eleven members. We are pleased to have received new members that are excited about improving the lives of Indiana youth through the legislative process.

Furthermore, the Indiana legislative Youth Advisory Council has also undergone some leadership changes. Katherine Carlton now serves as Vice Chair. In addition, Joshua Waddell currently serves as the council's Press Secretary.

In this report we will offer a recommendation for Reforming School Discipline. It is the council's observation that both suspension and expulsion can have a negative impact on some Hoosier youth. The council will be pursuing legislative reform in the coming year. We hope that the council and the Indiana General Assembly can actively work together on this issue.

Finally, we continue to believe that the Indiana Legislative Youth Advisory Council can be a useful tool in bridging the gap between Indiana's elected representatives and their youngest constituents. We hope that through this report, you gain valuable insight into the current concerns of Indiana's Youth. We look forward to working together to better the lives of young Hoosiers across our great state.

Cordially,

Lafayette D. Jordan

Lafayette D. Jordan,
Chair, Indiana Legislative Youth Advisory Council

Official Membership Listing

Officers

Lafayette Dashaen Jordan, Chair
of Fort Wayne, Indiana

Katherine Carlton, Vice Chair
of Westfield, Indiana

Andrew Dam, Secretary
of Evansville, Indiana

James Wells, Legislative Liaison
of Gary, Indiana

Joshua Waddell, Press Secretary
of Jeffersonville, Indiana

Membership

Alexander Barr
of Laporte, Indiana

Ryley Ruminski
of Michigan City, Indiana

William Hart
of Terre Haute, Indiana

Austin Theisz
of Terre Haute, Indiana

Hunter Held
of Newburgh, Indiana

Jessica VandenBoom
of Markle, Indiana

Council Advisory

Marilyn Smith, Indiana Bar Foundation
of Indianapolis, Indiana

A Recommendation for Reforming School Discipline

Issue:

Suspension and expulsion affect students in disparate ways. Where minorities, students from low-income families, males, and the disabled are disproportionately disciplined using expulsion and suspension, the methodology and merits of expulsion and suspension must be reevaluated.¹ Whether the root of the problem is in discriminatory administrations or in genuinely misbehaving students, it's important to realize the social implications of expulsion and suspension. Of the demographics listed above, low-income, minority, and disabled students are all groups who have much to gain from education but are disproportionately removed from the classroom. Furthermore, students with emotional disorders are especially disproportionately affected. Consistently keeping these students out of the classroom decreases any educational gains they could receive, thus perpetuating a system of disadvantage. This system of not educating already at-risk students only feeds what is known as the "pipeline to prison theory," which means that students with poor behavior during their educational careers often end up incarcerated because those with poor behavior are often expelled and/or suspended, leaving them without an education.

Recommendation:

The Indiana Legislative Youth Advisory Council recommends that Indiana adopts a policy that aims to reform and expand disciplinary action in the education system. This includes reforming how schools report their use of disciplinary action and implementing a system that holds them more accountable on how they give out punishments. One possible way that schools might do so is by implementing the use of "In-School Suspension." In-School Suspension is a punishment wherein students are punished by doing all of their work supervised alone in a room. They lose the social aspect of school for the duration of the punishment, but do not lose educational time.

This might also include funding for state-level programs that instruct educators on the merits of restorative justice—a form of discipline that focuses on the perpetrator fixing the problem they

¹ United States of America. U.S. Department of Education. Office for Civil Rights. *WWW2.ed.gov*. Dept. of Ed., Mar. 2014. Web. 16 Nov. 2014.

caused, getting to the underlying factors that caused the delinquent behavior, and building positive social skills of the wrongdoer.² Additionally, the council recommends that Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) be integrated more widely into schools. PBIS is not a program to be implemented, but rather a framework through which to approach students. An example of PBIS at work would be a teacher observing a student's behavior and helping the student develop a multi-component plan to stop the misbehavior. PBIS is a way for teachers to maintain their classrooms by acknowledging and working to change misbehavior without removing the student from the learning environment³. When the United States Congress amended the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), lawmakers specifically noted that PBIS positively impacts learning. IDEA states, "Almost 30 years of research and experience has demonstrated that the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by—providing incentives for whole-school approaches, scientifically based early reading programs, **positive behavioral interventions and supports...**" which shows that this alternative to suspension and expulsion is federally endorsed. In fact, in cases where students with disabilities, that (impede learning) are qualified for Individualized Education Programs, or IEPs, IDEA requires that the entire team of teachers, parents, and administrators who are creating the IEP consider the use of PBIS⁴.

In addition, when individual districts adopt their own student code of conduct, specific statutory language should be used to outline which actions result in zero-tolerance expulsions, including, but not limited to, carrying guns and explosives, and the illegal selling and use of drugs. Being specific on a state-level, increases the consistency with which these punishments are applied. At a minimum, ILYAC recommends addressing discipline issues in ways that protect the integrity of instruction for all students while avoiding decreasing instructional time for the misbehaving student.

² Illinois. Illinois Criminal Justice Information Agency. *Implementing Restorative Justice*. By Jessica Ashley and Kimberly Burke. U.S. Dept. of Justice, n.d. Web. 16 Nov. 2014.

³ Cole, Sandi, and Russ Skiba, PhD. "Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports." *PBIS Indiana*. Indiana University, n.d. Web. 29 Oct. 2015.

⁴ "Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports - OSEP." *PBIS and the Law*. N.p., n.d. Web. 29 Oct. 2015.

A Recommendation for Improving Financial Literacy

Issue:

Roth IRA, home equity loans, payday loans, gray charges, conventional mortgage, and capital gain—to the average individual those words hold no significance, when in fact, they might be some of the most important vocabulary of one’s adult life. It’s especially important to young adults making some of their first but nonetheless important financial decisions, such as college loans or mortgages. According to a 2013 Consumer Financial Literacy Survey, 57% of U.S. citizens feel that they do not have enough savings, 31% have nothing saved for retirement, 31% have no savings, and 26% do not pay their bills on time.⁵

Champlain College’s Center for Financial Literacy released a report that evaluated states’ efforts at improving financial literacy in high schools. Indiana was given a “C”, when evaluated on a grading scale.⁶ Indiana Code has set guidelines on personal finance skills and financial literacy: “each school corporation, charter school and accredited nonpublic school shall include in its curriculum...instruction concerning personal fiscal responsibility.”⁷ However, no classes are required of any student, and it is not necessary of schools to offer a course in personal finance. The statutory requirement can be met through “integrat[ion] within curriculum” or by simply “conducting a seminar.”³

When describing states with a C grade, the report details that though “personal finance topics are taught in high school by inclusion...in states’ instructional guidelines...it is not clear how the states determine if the local schools are in fact meeting requirements.” It is also noted that these personal finance topics are given lesser priority in the curriculum: where schools must require some instruction in financing, a student’s proficiency isn’t a graduation requirement.²

⁵ 2013 Consumer Financial Literacy Survey. Rep. Harris Interactive Inc., 2013. Web. 16 Nov. 2014.

⁶ Pelletier, John. *Is Your State Making the Grade?: 2015 National Report Card on State Efforts to Improve Financial Literacy in High Schools*. Publication. Champlain College Center for Financial Literacy, 20 Oct. 2015. Web. 31 Oct. 2015.

⁷ Indiana Code § 20.30.5.19

In contrast, Utah, determined by the Center for Financial Literacy to be “the only state in the nation worthy of the Grade A+,” requires that all high school students enroll in a personal finance class for one semester. Additionally, the state requires that educators for the course obtain a specific endorsement in financial literacy topics such as financial planning; credit and investing; and consumer, personal, and family economics.²

Recommendation:

The Indiana Legislative Youth Advisory Council recommends policy that holds the Indiana Department of Education responsible for implementing a stronger financial literacy program, as well as increasing accountability measures that hold school districts more responsible for meeting financial literacy standards. Ideally, this would take the form of a standalone class with state-specified standards for class content; however, considering that schools already have problems fitting in all their current required classes, there should at minimum be more robust, appropriate evaluation and enforcement ensuring that students learn basic financial principles that include the “numeracy and capacity to do calculations related to interest rates; understanding of inflation; and understanding of risk diversification.”⁸

Ideal reformation would take the shape of Utah’s Financial Literacy classes, as aforementioned in the prior section. Smaller but still invaluable steps that Indiana might take include teacher training for those wishing to teach personal finance courses, assistance of schools that want to offer financial literacy in terms of course materials, or funding incentives for schools or school boards that adopt initiatives on improving financial literacy.²

Increasing financial literacy might seem like a costly problem that places undue burden on already-struggling schools; however, the returns from improved financial literacy and skills would be momentous for students of all backgrounds. On the micro level, “financial knowledge is associated with greater retirement planning” and less debt accumulation. In addition, those with lesser literacy ended up in riskier “high-cost borrowing” situations.² By increasing financial literacy, people would hopefully save more for retirement and borrow more reasonably, which in turn would help alleviate poverty and decrease the amount of transfer payments the government would make to address these issues.

⁴ Lusardi, Annamaria, and Olivia Mitchell. “The Economic Importance of Financial Literacy: Theory and Evidence.” *Journal of Economic Literature* 52.1 (2014): 5-40. Web. 16 Nov. 2014.

A Recommendation for Improving College Youth Voting

Issue:

College students - ages 19-29 - are rated as having the lowest number of voting individuals by age group. This demographic has a low number of voters due in part to their dense schedules resulting in lack of time and availability; a distinct lack of interest regarding the outcome of the vote, as well as a lack of information regarding the importance of voting and of the steps necessary to vote, also influences voting rates in this demographic.

Severe time constraints are a major concern to many college age voters: many believe that voting isn't worth their time, or would take too much of their time to accomplish. Many college students live on campus and are often far away from home rendering them unable to vote in their hometown, lacking knowledge of how to vote away from home- and generally lacking an economical way to return home- this leads to a reduced number of voters who know how, or are willing to put in the effort to vote. The primary focus of college students is their studies, and political interest gets thrown to the wayside. Lack of information can be regarded as the most corporeal, and therefore most reasonable to resolve, obstacle to voting numbers. Perpetuating a system of disadvantage.

Recommendation:

The Indiana Legislative Youth Advisory Council recommends implementing an “Automated Bot” service that informs college students of upcoming elections. Studies reveal text messages are most effective for assembling a larger number of voters in the 19-29 age range.⁹ Setting up automated messaging services, such as text and email, should work towards informing college students about voting, and garner a higher number of voting ballots from them. Distributing information through social media is another likely effective method of reaching out to the college age demographic to show them the importance of voting.

⁹ Michelson, Melissa R. “How to Increase Voter Turnout in Communities Where People Have Not Usually Participated in Elections,” Scholars Strategy Network, 2014.

Some available options to get the word out to college students through social media include using YouTube and Facebook; a strategy shown to be effective by a group of students from Manitoba Canada who devised a system to get the word out.

“The biggest project we have on the go right now is pushing out our public service announcement video campaigns on ad space through YouTube and Facebook...”¹⁰ stated the students. While YouTube and Facebook can be effective, they suffer in that the information is not necessarily as instant to reach students as are other methods.

A more immediate way of reaching students is through automated messaging. A large number of students are able to go home on weekends occasionally. By sending out information on voting as close as possible to the time they receive their absentee ballots at home they will be better versed on voting when the time comes that they are able, increasing the chance they will vote. Therefore, ILYAC is recommending to implement an automated bot service at the time they receive their absentee ballots at their permanent residences.

¹⁰ Still, Mike. "Get out the Youth Vote." *The Manitoban*. 7 Oct. 2015. Web. 23 Nov. 2015

A Resolution in Support of Keeping Medications Out of the Hands of Indiana's Youth

WHEREAS, Indiana's child Safety Task Force is a part of the Commission of Improving the Status of Children in Indiana; and

WHEREAS, their mission is to "explore best practices and evidence-based research to create positive, lasting outcomes for children who abuse drugs, live in households where drug abuse occurs, or who are in need of mental health treatment"; and

WHEREAS, some Hoosier children struggle with drug addictions and have access to medications that were not intended for them; and

WHEREAS, some parents with medications are not aware of their child's addiction and do not properly store them away from their children; and

WHEREAS, some pharmacies do not have prescription drop boxes in their stores; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Indiana Legislative Youth Advisory Council recommends that the Indiana General Assembly create legislation that encourages parents to lock up their medications and encourage pharmacies to install prescription drop boxes in their stores.